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United States Department of Agriculture

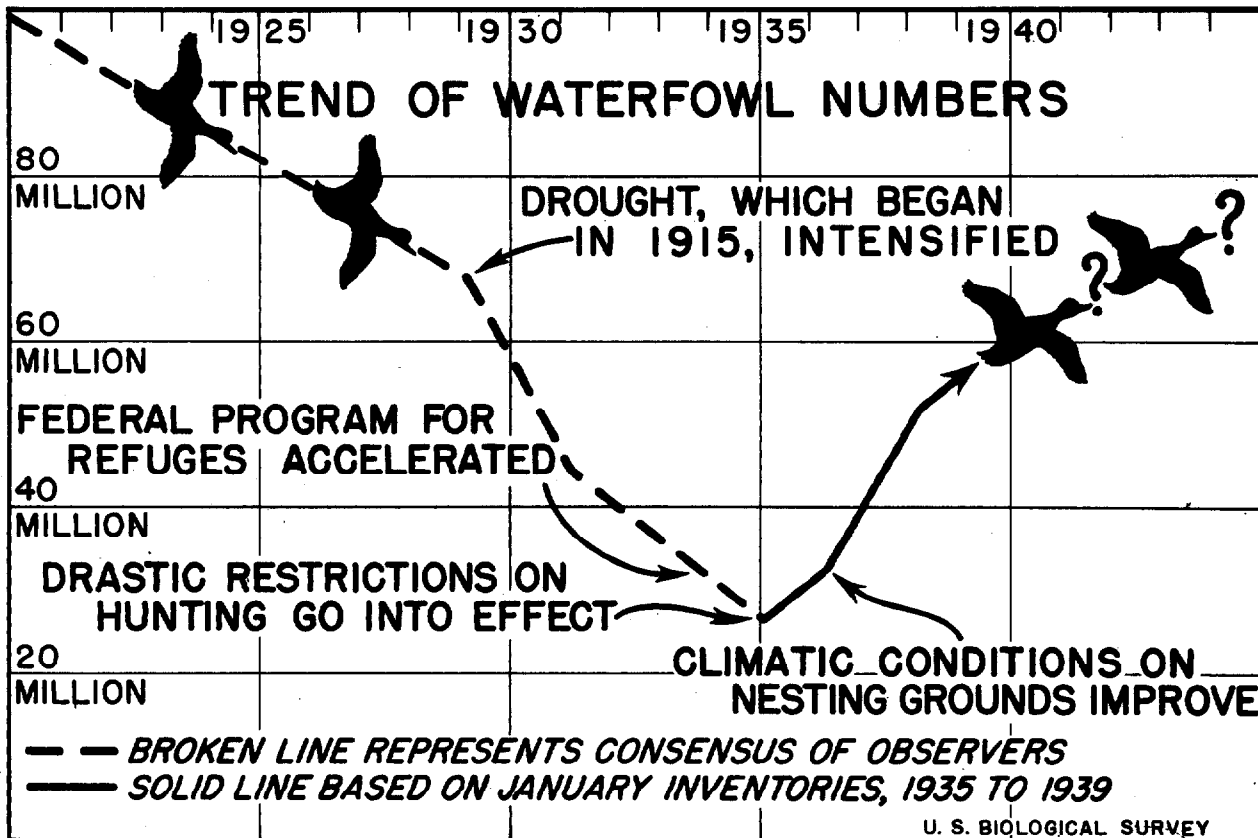
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U. S. BIOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORTS RESULTS OF WATERFOWL INVENTORY

The trend of the wild duck numbers is still upward, says the U. S. Biological Survey, although the increases of the past four years are showing a tendency to level off and the numerical total is still far below what it was a decade ago.

Officials of the Biological Survey recently compiled a report of the Bureau's continuous studies of the waterfowl situation during the past year. These



studies culminated in the annual midwinter inventory in January during which observers reported about $14\frac{1}{2}$ million birds, as compared with $12\frac{1}{4}$ million last year and $9\frac{1}{2}$ million in 1937. The Bureau estimates that the inventories covered about 25 to 30 percent of the continent's waterfowl.

These results, according to the Biological Survey, indicate that it is possible to maintain an adequate continental supply of migratory waterfowl. The requisite is sound management. This involves restoration and conservation of waterfowl habitat in breeding, migration, and winter ranges, coupled with enforced regulations on hunting. Intelligent management, the Bureau points out, requires a basis of fact. It is for this reason that careful investigations are carried on annually. The findings are used in drafting hunting regulations.

Though the gain in numbers is gratifying, the Bureau reminds sportsmen that waterfowl populations are still far from recovery. The last four midwinter inventories show only that the birds are beginning to respond to treatment. "Further improvement to bring the birds up to normal numbers depends upon continued cooperation in the restoration program," the Bureau adds.

The January inventory is the result of simultaneous observations made throughout the country by the Biological Survey's corps of field workers and qualified volunteers. These observers are under the leadership of the Bureau's 10 regional directors. Full cooperation is received from the Army Air Corps, Naval Air Service, Coast Guard, Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, National Park Service, State forestry and game and fish departments, private agencies, and others.

Even airplanes and snowshoes are used to transport observers to the waterfowl areas. One regional director enlisted the services of 11 planes, 3 blimps, 18 powerboats, and 28 cars, with a total of 240 observers. One resourceful agent used a locomotive on a waterfowl area crossed by rails.

Though $2\frac{1}{4}$ million more ducks were noted this year than last, the ratios between figures for all species were not the same. Observers reported decreases in a few species. Important gains were noted in mallards, black ducks, pintails, baldpates, and scaups. Particularly encouraging, the Survey said, was a substantial gain in the number of redheads. Geese showed a decrease, a small increase in Canada geese being offset by a considerable decrease in blue geese.

Midwinter inventories are preceded by three other seasonal investigations. The northward movement of birds during spring migrations is observed by the Biological Survey's corps of volunteer cooperators stationed throughout the four principal flyways. In fall, the observers note the birds' southward movements. In summer four naturalists of the Survey conduct investigations in the breeding grounds.

Called flyways biologists, these naturalists make year-round studies in each of the country's four major waterfowl flyways, following the birds' migrations and also observing conditions on both the breeding and wintering grounds. The January inventory is the climax of the year's activities in waterfowl population studies.

Continuing these investigations, the Biological Survey is now sending its four biologists and their parties to Alaska and Canada where they will again study conditions on the principal waterfowl breeding, feeding, and resting areas. If conditions on the breeding grounds are favorable the Bureau officials expect further improvement in the waterfowl populations. "But," they add, "you can't count ducks before they are hatched."